



Honored b-13-19

Louise McNeill Pease, of Lewisburg, was honored by West Virginia Writers, Inc., by being named this year's recipient of the organization's JUG Award. The award was presented at the WVW Annual Conference, held this past weekend at Cedar Lakes. Accepting the award on behalf of Mrs. Pease, who was unable to attend, was her sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Dorsey, of Morgantown. The award was made at the banquet on Saturday night.

The JUG award was created by West Virginia Writers, Inc., to recognize excellence in the field of writing by a West Virginian. Mrs. Pease is the third person to receive the JUG award and the first poet honored. Alberta Pierson Hannum received the first JUG in 1983 and Jim Comstock, country editor of Richwood, the second in 1984.

In private life Mrs. Roger Waterman Pease, Louise was born and reared on a mountain farm in Pocahontas near Marlinton, attending a two-room school her father taught.

She received her Bachelor's degree in English from Concord College and her Master's degree from Miami University of Ohio. She later received a doctorate in history.

"Paradox Hill: From Appalachia to Lunar Shore," was published by the West Virginia University Foundation, Inc.

She writes in traditional verse form. She believes, however, that the beauty of poetry lies in content and feeling rather than in form. She believes poetry should be useful—useful to the spirit, useful to relieve the mind and useful to society.

Her poetry has appeared in such respected national literary magazines as Saturday Review and Atlantic Monthly. During the 1950's, she was a frequent contributor to the Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, Harpers and other magazines.

Her husband is a former instructor at West Virginia University. They have a son, Douglas, who is a graduate of the University of Connecticut.

Always interested in helping others to write better, she has been an instructor, in recent years, at the Summer Writers Conference at Marietta, Ohio.

As Stephen Vincent Benet said in the Foreword to "Gauley Mountain": "There is a new voice in the land."

INDIAN PIPES

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And brought these river stones to lay
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She received her Bachelor's degree in English from Concord College and her Master's degree from Miami University of Ohio. She later received a doctorate in history from West Virginia University.

Her most famous work is "Gauley Mountain," which was her first collection of poems, published in 1939 with a foreword written by Stephen Vincent Benet. "Gauley Mountain," a series of historical poems tracing the lives of various West Virginia families, is heavily slanted toward pioneer life, as are many of her poems.

"Time Is Our House," her second volume of poetry, was published in 1942. It contains philosophical poems and a section of lyrics on World War II.

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And brought these river stones to lay
upon
Their chieftain, fallen in the stealth of
dawn

By flinted arrow from a Shawnee bow.

Spring moons have come and hunting
moons have gone,

Sheep nipped the grass and rabbits
scratched the snow

Across this grave,—the pale-face
tracked the doe,

And bench-legged curs pursued the
mottled fawn.

But still in dusky summer when the
loon

Cries from the shallows of approaching
night,

Between the stones they heaped above
his mound,

Beneath the eerie pallor of the moon,
Bloom ghostly flowers—pipes of waxen

white.

Miss Louise McNeill of Marlinton, is a young poet who is beginning to get recognition and have her verses published in various magazines. I have before me the 1931 autumn number of "Star-Dust", a journal of poetry, published at Washington, D. C. In it is the announcement that the monthly book prize offered by a distinguished western poet for best poems sent into the Stardust Club each month was awarded to Miss McNeill for the month of April. Under the caption "Fragment:"

I have grown strong with the strength of my desolate mountains,
Amored from bitterness, pulseless to touch or to sound.

There is reality only in the wind, the jagged iciness of frozen ground

In "The Poets Forum" for September, published at Howe, Oklahoma, Miss McNeill has three poems. Here is one of them, "Request":

Tell him, all who love me,
After I have gone

The "Kaleidoscope," a national magazine of poetry for August, published at Dallas, Texas, says Miss Louise McNeill of Marlinton, at the age of twenty years, makes her debut as a poet. Her poem, "Unless You Knew:"

"You, lying there so calm and
strangely still,
No protest on your lips, no
word of grief,
Strike a swift still wonder to the
soul of mine
Who never knew belief.

It is incredible that you should
close
Your eyes to all quick beauty,
Stay your breath,
You who loved all life, laughter and
tears,
As tho' you welcome death!

It is incredible that you should take,
Peace for sharp ecstasy, silence for







Governor Arch A. Moore, Jr., is shown with West Virginia's Poet Laureate, Louise McNeill Pease, at the Cultural Center in Charleston on August 16 at a ceremony at which Mrs. Pease donated her books and manuscripts to the State Department of Culture and History. Gov. Moore accepted the gift on behalf of the State.

Good Living, a retirement community in Malden, where she had made her home for several years.

The daughter of the late G. D. and Grace (McNeill) McNeill, she was born at Buckeye January 9, 1911.

In 1939 she married Roger W. Pease, who died September 24, 1990.

Her husband, her parents, a sister, Elizabeth Dorsey, and a brother, Ward McNeill, preceded her in death.

Surviving her are a son, Douglas McNeill Pease, of South Windsor, Connecticut; a granddaughter, Noralyn M. Pease; and a brother, James W. McNeill, of Buckeye.

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Services were held Sunday on the lawn of Cabin Creek Quilts in Malden and then on Monday at 11 a. m. in VanReenen Funeral Home by the Rev. Roy Gwinn. Burial was on the McNeill Farm at Buckeye.

Mrs. Pease was Poet Laureate of West Virginia, named in 1977 by then-Governor Jay Rockefeller. She started writing poetry when she was 16 and had poems published in many national magazines. She was the author of several books, *Mountain White* (1931), *Gauley Mountain*, *Time is Our House*, *Paradox Hill*, *Elderberry Flood*, *The Milkweed Ladies* (her memoirs), *Hill Daughter: New and Selected Poems* (1991) and many

Hill Daughter: New and Selected Poems (1991), and many magazine articles.

Just before her death she completed her last book. Her son came to see her, typed the last chapter, put it in the mail to the publishers, and then she seemed to let go of life, according to the family.

She graduated from Concord College and earned a master's degree at Miami University in Ohio, and a doctorate from West Virginia University.

She taught English and history for more than 30 years, from rural schools in Pocahontas County to Potomac State, Concord, Fairmont State, and Davis and Elkins colleges. In 1937 she was named Teacher of the Year at Concord College and was selected Daughter of the Year by the West Virginia

McNeill's poems featured on public radio

West Virginia Public Radio will air a special program titled "Gauley Mountain" Thursday, June 20, at 8 p.m. This West Virginia Day broadcast will feature the poems from West Virginia Poet Laureate Louise McNeill's book of the same name. Noted West Virginia musician David Morris of Ivydale and award-winning West Virginia poet Irene McKinney of Belington will read the poems, providing narration and character voices.

Gauley Mountain, published in 1939 by Harcourt Brace, is a history (1760-1930) of one of the most scenic and rugged parts of West Virginia told through poems about people, places and events.

Special historic characters, such as Mad Anne Bailey and Claude Crozet, are included, but most poems are fictional, following the lives of settlers sometimes through several generations.

Larry Groce, producer of this special, said, "West Virginia Public Radio's production of "Gauley Mountain" will attempt to do for Louise McNeill's book what she did for the history of her beloved Gauley country."

West Virginia Public Radio can be heard on 88.5 FM in Charleston, 91.7 in Beckley, 90.9 in Morgantown, 89.9 in Huntington and Wheeling, 88.9 in Martinsburg and Buckhannon/Weston.

Louise McNeill

In becoming one of Appalachia's most respected poets, Louise McNeill sang with pride about the mountain heritage of the region's residents.

Now she traces their consciousness from pioneer days to atomic frontiers and looks to the future with uncertainty in her new book of poems, "Paradox Hill: From Appalachia to Lunar Shore."

Her book was published recently by McClain Printing Company of Parsons for the West Virginia University Library with private funds made available through the WVU Foundation, Inc. Copies may be ordered for \$4.50 each, plus 50 cents for postage and handling, from the Book Store, Mountainlair, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W. Va. 26506.

But who is Louise McNeill that anyone should listen to her prophecies or share her pride and fear?

She's a wife and mother, and history teacher at Fairmont State College. But more than that she's a person with strong convictions about herself, her heritage, her homeland and its future. And she's able to translate these convictions into compelling poetic rhythms.

Her name is well-known to the editors and publishers of respected national literary magazines such as Saturday Review and Atlantic Monthly, which have published her poems.

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poetry can deal validly with social criticism. I'm not a protestant, but I'm not ashamed to try something along this line. I see no reason for poets to be so fine fingered."

Academians, and sometimes poets themselves, often attempt to set down rules for poetic subject matter. Miss McNeill objects. She says she never places limits on what poetry should or can deal with.

"I once heared Allen Tate say that no one should write a poem about his mother. So I have deliberately written one about mine," she said.

"Paradox Hill" is divided into three sections—"Appalachia," "Scattered Leaves" and "Lunar Shores." Each deals with aspects of Appalachian life...from the traditional to the futuristic.

The book is full of the kind of poetry that Stephen Vincent Benet, in his foreword to an earlier collection of her poems, "Gauley Mountain," also published by McClain Printing Co., described as simple, direct and forceful. Many of the poems are laced with humor, some are tinged with sorrow, others are filled with outright rage.

Many of the stories spun in Miss McNeill's ballads were told to her by her father, Douglas McNeill, who was a writer, teacher and one-time miller. He

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Miss McNeill was born and reared on a mountain farm in Pocahontas County, where her family has lived since pre-revolutionary days. She attended the two-room schoolhouse where her father taught. And she received her bachelor's degree in English from Concord College, her master's degree from Miami University of Ohio; and a doctorate in history from West Virginia University. Why a doctorate in history?

"It was for a very practical reason," she recalled. "When I wanted to get my doctorate, WVU didn't offer one in English."

Practicality is one of her first considerations, whether applied to finishing her education or writing poetry. Miss McNeill never has enthroned herself in an ivory tower. She feels that a poet can work as practically as a bricklayer or someone who bakes a loaf of bread. This philosophy shows in her work.

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Sometimes she is inspired by conversations she hears in public places. Two of the most poignant poems in "Paradox Hill" are entitled "Overheard on a Bus."

At the age of 18, Miss McNeill began to write seriously, and two years later her first poems were published in a Dallas, Tex., magazine, Kaliedograph. Since then, she has published three volumes of poems and several short stories.

"I often will write a poem in a few hours," she observed. "The poems that turn out right are the ones that are written rapidly. Sometimes if I fail to get it down the first time, I can go back to it later but that doesn't happen very often."

She is a great believer in form. When she decided to write seriously, she studied form, pattern and rhythm. She rarely writes in free verse form.

Miss McNeill works very hard at finding the right words and perfecting the images in her poems. She throws away two of every three poems that she writes.

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"I believe poetry should be useful," Miss McNeill said. "It can be useful to the spirit, useful to relieve the mind and useful to society. Of course, it's useful to the poet, too, but it should go beyond that."

Miss McNeill says serious poetry has become confessionalist and that ballads, such as Bob Dylan's protest songs, are replacing poetry in one area. Some of her poems, like Dylan's deal with the public's fears and social issues.

"I feel—and this makes me quite quaint among most poets today—that

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Dr. Ruel E. Foster, chairman of the WVU Department of English, thinks one of Miss McNeill's greatest virtues is her complete lack of affectation.

"You'll find none of the big, dramatic rhetoric of Shakespeare or Milton in her poetry," Dr. Foster said. "She's contemporary, yet you'll find none of the tortured rhetoric that many modern poets fall prey to."

"She is part of a great tradition in American poetry," he observed.